

Lewis County Office for the Aging

Annual Report

2025



Mission Statement: *The mission of the Lewis County Office for the Aging (OFA) is to promote the well-being of older adults in Lewis County through coordinated services that enhance independence, dignity, and quality of life.*

2025 Budgeting:

2025 Total Budget: \$2,155,801

Federal Funded: 19% of the total budget

State Funded: 46% of the total budget

County Funded: 30% of the total budget

Local Donations and Cost Share: 5% of the total budget

NYConnects - This program is the trusted point for older adults, caregivers and families seeking unbiased information about long-term services & supports. In 2025, we managed 2,499 inquiries; 398 referrals were made with 107 follow-up calls and 123 caregivers served. The most common types of information requested with NYConnects were 963 calls on health insurance counseling; 871 calls for Housing Support; and 373 calls for Home Care services.

HIICAP - Provides unbiased insurance counseling to those new to Medicare, those pending retirement, and those currently enrolled in Medicare. Also assists with benefit program applications that can equate to savings of \$8,400 or more per year for Medicare beneficiaries. Saved 366 Lewis County Medicare beneficiaries a total of \$139,123 during Medicare Open Enrollment Period.

EISEP - Program helps to meet the in home care needs of individuals age 60 and older, prolonging the need for more extensive care in a long-term care facility. In 2025, we subcontracted with five agencies to assist 90 older adults with housekeeping, bathing, laundry, shopping, and related tasks.

Respite - Programs provide in-home respite services to caregivers to help reduce the burden of caregiving. Our caregiver support group meets monthly and provided 26 caregivers the opportunity to learn strategies from their peers. Information is also provided on programming available to assist with the caregiving role. In 2025, we subcontracted with five agencies to assist 24 caregivers with supports and respite services.

Legal - We were able to assist 27 individuals age 60 and older with a wide range of legal services. Most of our requests for service involve advance directives. Our scope of services also includes securing health benefits, maintaining safe and affordable housing, preventing and educating on elder abuse, and maintaining adequate income.

PERS - We were able to assist 68 households with emergency response devices through our contract with Doyle Security. We also collaborate with the Lewis County Sheriff's Department on Project Lifesaver. This program helps to ensure the safety of individuals who may wander and are at an increased risk of getting lost. We were able to give 12 families piece of mind during 2025.

Transportation - OFA assists individuals with getting rides to and from medical appointments through VTC as well as getting general transportation through our GoGoGrandparent program. We assisted people with 41 medical transports and 59 general transports. Our Senior Rides Programs provided 15 transports. In 2025 we received 107 phone calls for transportation.

Nutrition Program Updates:

Relocation of Lowville Meal Site - Early in the year, the Lewis County Office for the Aging relocated its Lowville congregate meal site to the Double Play Community Center, which is also the location of the Respite Café.

Congregate Meal Program - In 2025, we provided a total of 11,909 meals across all six meal sites located in Copenhagen, Croghan, Harrisville, Lowville, Lyons Falls, and West Leyden. These congregate sites serve individuals aged 60 and older, offering an opportunity to socialize while enjoying a nutritious meal for a recommended contribution of \$4.

Home-Delivered Meal Program - Our home-delivered meal program serves more than 200 individuals each week, delivering meals three days per week. A total of 43,559 meals were provided throughout the year. This program is designed for individuals aged 60 and older who may have difficulty leaving their homes, helping to promote independence. Meals are provided for a recommended contribution of \$4.

Farmers' Market Coupon Distribution - This year, we set a record by distributing more farmers' market coupons than ever before. We distributed 1,500 booklets to older adults in our community, with a total value of \$37,500. For the first time, New York State Office for the Aging also permitted a second distribution of booklets.

HEAP (Heating Energy Assistance Program) – This program assists low-income individuals with heating their homes. For program year 2025 – 2026 over 280 HEAP applications have been processed for those 60 years old and over through OFA. Between 9/1/25 to 12/31/25, 654 phone calls have been made and received by our HEAP Coordinator for the HEAP program. OFA assists DSS with this program by gathering information and completing the applications we receive, prior to sending over to DSS, in where they can then process these cases more efficiently by having our part completed.

Evidence-Based Programming – We offer quarterly workshops throughout the county in collaboration with Double Play Community Center. These workshop offerings including Aquatics and Walk With Ease guided 191 individuals to lead more active lifestyles. We also offered a chronic disease self-management workshop series and we were able to assist 12 individuals.

Aging In Place (AIP) - This program assists adults aged 60 and over with modifications that allow them to stay in their homes. Due to limited funding, we were able to serve 3 individuals this year. Services provided include the following: New wheelchair ramps, new motorized wheelchair, 2 new walkers, many grab bars placed throughout homes, an assistive device to help with toilet transfer, new door handles – levered to allow for easier use, and standing bars to assist with stability. For 2025 – 61 phone calls were taken for the AIP program.

Companion Pets and Elli Q - We have animatronic pets (a.k.a. Companion Pets) available for those aged 60 and over that live alone to assist with loneliness. These pets move and make sounds providing needed contact to reduce loneliness. We currently have 77 pets in use. Elli Q is an AI based digital care companion designed to help older adults remain engaged, connected, and independent. We currently have 11 Elli Q's in use.

Santa for Seniors - This year there were 109 Lewis County residents that received gifts from our Santa for Seniors program. There were 60 shoppers who adopted our Seniors. We had a total of 14 individual volunteers, in addition to a group from South Lewis High School that included 18 helpers, and a group from the ARC which included 6 helpers. In addition to the community adopting and buying for our Seniors, other individuals from the community also donated items such as gift cards, wrapping paper and supplies, homemade dish cloths, personal care items, and pet supplies like food and toys.

Volunteer Program - In 2025, we had 55 active volunteers. They volunteer in areas anywhere from helping wrap or shop for our Santa for Seniors program, assisting at our Dining sites, delivering our quarterly newsletter, placing Friendly Calls to our older adults, or stopping in for a visit, transporting, assisting with shopping/errands, or helping out at our events or tabling. There was a total of 1,484 volunteer hours this year. Each year we hold a Volunteer Appreciation Event in April and honor our *Volunteer of the Year*; this year's recipient was Mr. Thomas Gerow.

Community Engagement & Socialization - Each year our office offers free events in the community for anyone age 60 and over. These events can help promote better mental health by strengthening community connections and may reduce social isolation. Events held in 2025 included Healthy Aging Day at the Fair, the Puzzle Contest, Annual Seniors Golf Tournament, Fall Fest & Public Hearing, and our Popcorn & Movie Event. These events are advertised through outlets such as our email listing, quarterly newsletter, County Facebook page, OFA website, The Moose/WLLG Radio, and Journal and Republican.



Festivities at Healthy Aging Day at the Fair



2025 Randy D. Streeter Older Adult of the Year recipient with the Randy Streeter family at our Healthy Aging Day

Seniors Golf Tournament Champion Teams



Some of our Puzzle Contest participants & winners



Festivities at our Fall Fest & Public Hearing

Captions from 2025



Lewis County OFA and Lewis County Emergency Management team up to "Shop with a Cop"



Lewis County OFA welcomes Citizen Preparedness Corps to present Emergency Preparedness for citizens of Lewis County

Homeland Security and Emergency Services
Citizen Preparedness Corps

SIGN UP FOR A FREE CLASS TO LEARN ABOUT PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

With severe weather events becoming more frequent and more extreme, it is more important than ever that New Yorkers are prepared for disasters. The NY Citizen Preparedness Training Program teaches residents to have the tools and resources to prepare for any type of disaster, respond accordingly and recover as quickly as possible to normal conditions. This training course will provide an introduction to responding to a natural or man-made disaster. Participants will be advised on how to properly prepare for any disaster, including developing a family emergency plan and stocking up on emergency supplies. Each family that attends will receive one preparedness kit.

WHERE: Lewis County Office for the Aging
8274 Outer Stone Street
Lowville NY 13357
Conference Room 1

WHEN: Thursday, December 04, 2025
11:00 AM



REGISTER: Registration is required to attend the event. To register visit <https://www.ny.gov/nyconnect> or scan the QR code.

LEWIS COUNTY
OFFICE FOR THE AGING & NY CONNECTS
315-376-5313

NEW YORK STATE
NY Connects
Your Link to Long Term Services and Supports

of LEWIS COUNTY
(800) 342-9871 (315) 376-5432

THIS EVENT IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY GOVERNOR ROCHUL IN CONJUNCTION WITH:

and the Lewis County Office for the Aging
(315) 376-5313
ofa@lewiscounty.ny.gov

OFA in the News!



Spotlight Story

Lewis County Traumatic Loss Teams

**Submitted by Carla M Hellinger,
Director of Lewis County Office for the Aging**



Lewis County's Postvention efforts, led by the Lewis County Traumatic Loss Team (TLT), have become a cornerstone in the region's suicide prevention strategy. By providing immediate, compassionate support to those impacted by a sudden or traumatic loss, the TLT has effectively reduced the risk of further tragedies, promoting both healing and recovery within the community. The team, composed of dedicated volunteers, offers on-scene responses to assist family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, hospital staff, emergency responders, and law enforcement during critical moments.

These active responses help normalize the grieving process, alleviate stress, and connect individuals with essential resources in real time. The TLT's formal debriefings offer structured support for those coping with the immediate aftermath of a traumatic event, ensuring they receive the necessary tools to process their grief. By forging meaningful relationships with affected individuals and leaving behind resources for further support, the TLT has helped to stabilize environments in the wake of crises, effectively reducing the likelihood of suicide contagion.

The response from community members has been overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing deep gratitude for the team's presence and guidance during their most difficult times. These efforts have not only facilitated healing but have also set a powerful example of how postvention, when properly implemented, can be a proactive and preventative force in suicide prevention, strengthening the community's resilience.

Lowville Lions set 'Wellness Matters' presentation

By ELAINE M. AVALLONE
eavallone@lowville.com Jul 18, 2025



Hellinger

LOWVILLE — Continuing with the monthly Lions Club Wellness Matters Seminars, Carla Hellinger, director of Lewis County Office of the Aging, will present "Wellness Matters" focusing on the wide range of services and supports offered by the department.

Nelson Schwartzentruber recipient of 2025 Randy Streeeter award

Apr 3, 2025



Nelson Schwartzentruber with Lewis County Office for the Aging Director Carla Hellinger. (Photo submitted)

LEWIS COUNTY — Lewis County Office for the Aging is proud to announce this year's Randy Streeeter Older Adult of the Year award recipient is Nelson Schwartzentruber, who is a lifelong resident of Lewis County. He and his wife Bernadine have raised three children, Eric, Carrie and John, and now have three grandchildren, Joshua, Sarah and Mary.




Lewis Co. warns public about jury duty scam



Carla Hellinger
DIRECTOR - LEWIS COUNTY OFFICE FOR THE AGEING

The Lewis County Sheriff's Office says scammers are calling local people to say they need to pay a fine for missing jury duty.